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AUTHOR Peterson, Marvin W.; Anderson, Aaron D.

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ABSTRACT

Today, under an array of market pressures and increased competition, institutional researchers, administrators, and faculty are being called on to work in more collaborative cross-institutional arrangements. This paper uses a case study method to describe the process of forming a Civic Engagement Cluster, a collaborative of 10 different institutions, and to illustrate and identify lessons for institutions involved in designing and developing multi-organizational collaboratives. Thirty interviews were conducted with leaders of initiatives at nine institutions and documents related to the Kellogg Forum on Higher Education Transformation (KFHET) initiative were reviewed. From the experiences of KFHET participants, a number of lessons can be drawn. It was apparent that the nature of academic work can keep institutions isolated and competing with each other rather than collaborating. Semantic problems are often roadblocks, and ambiguous collaborative and project goals can lead to confusion. Organizational structure can have a direct effect on the collaborative, and time demands from outside the Cluster can distract participants. In general, any attempt to change institutions can be considered difficult. It will involve a reconceptualization of current practice on the part of key institutional actors. Appendixes contain a KFHET time line, project descriptions, a description of the Civic Engagement Cluster structure, and cluster institution descriptions. (Contains 16 references.) (SLD)

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The Civic Engagement Cluster: The Design and Creation of an Interorganizational Collaboration

By

Marvin W. Peterson

&

Aaron D. Anderson

D. Vura

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Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education
2117 School of Education
601 East University Street
The University of Michigan
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259

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The Civic Engagement Cluster: The Design and Creation of an Interorganizational Collaboration

Abstract:

Today, under an array of market pressures and increased competition, traditional colleges and universities are being forced to create innovative methods for organizational learning to improve both academic and non-academic functions. As one solution, institutional researchers, administrators, and faculty are being called to work in more collaborative, cross-institutional arrangements. Using case study method, this paper serves two ends. The first is to describe the process of forming of a Civic Engagement Cluster (a collaborative of ten different institutions). Based on this experience, the second aim is to illustrate and identify relevant learnings for institutions involved in designing and developing multi-organizational collaboratives.

Introduction

At the close of the 20th Century, the system of higher education in the United States faced uncertainty and significant challenges furnishing both opportunities and threats to the viability of the organizations within it (Clark, 1997; Drucker, 1994; Peterson & Dill, 1997). Still under an array of market pressures and increased competition, colleges and universities are being pushed to innovate methods to improve both academic and non-academic functions (Dill, 1999). Survival makes it imperative that colleges and universities learn from each other under the grim reality that failure to change in response to increasingly turbulent internal and external forces places the higher education industry at considerable risk (Clark, 2000; Dill, 1999).

During the 1990s, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (WKKF) launched two initiatives to meet these challenges bringing together a number of institutions engaged in changing operational structures with the explicit objective that they learn from each other. The first labeled the Kellogg Network for Institutional Transformation (KNIT), brought together five institutions engaged in transforming their home campuses in different ways for disparate reasons. To be more deliberate about extracting meaning from the KNIT initiative, a second project was grafted to KNIT. This learning integration group (LIG) was comprised of three research centers and a professional association. The LIG goal was to collaborate with KNIT and learn as much as possible about how institutions change and transform themselves. Eventually, LIG was combined with KNIT to form the Kellogg Forum on Higher Education Transformation (KFHET).

One major KFHET project was the creation of another multi-institutional collaborative that leveraged the "civic learning" movement (see Ehrlich, 2000). It was titled the Civic Engagement Cluster (CEC). In brief, the CEC was collaborative arrangement among ten colleges and universities from across the United States. Each institution cultivated a program

designed to instill democratic values and mores on its campus through engaging their respective communities via various learning types of opportunities. Individual campus efforts varied from working with Habitat for Humanity, to campus wide community service days, to reconfiguration of entire curricula, and working to observe and survey the recent Mexican elections. In conjunction with WKKF and through the leadership efforts of the New England Center for Research in Higher Education (NERCHE), these institutions worked together over the course of a year to share ideas and resources, provide mutual support, develop initiatives and serve as a both catalysts and institutional leaders for the civic engagement movement.

Like the WKKF's CEC, numerous foundations and professional associations fund or support an array of national consortia or networks. However, assessing their worth and extracting lessons from such collaboratives is seldom done. This study examines how the CEC was designed and developed. This paper serves two purposes: 1) to describe the interplay between individual KFHET stakeholders during the formation of the Civic Engagement Cluster, and 2) to illustrate relevant learnings about how to design and develop effective multi-institutional collaboratives.

Method

While organizational research in higher education uses both quantitative and qualitative methods (Peterson & Spencer, 1990), the literature offers no survey instruments for analyzing organizational or interorganizational learning. Research on learning among individuals has a long history, but applying similar research approaches focusing on the emergence of a new organizational unit is challenging. Therefore, we employed a case study research strategy because we were examining critical problems of practice and working to extending the knowledge base into an area with little related literature (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1993 & 1994).

The overlapping, interactive nature of the two WKKF initiatives necessitates inclusion of all KFHET participants in the sample. KFHET membership included administrators, scholars and staff from the following organizations:

a) The Kellogg Network for Institutional Transformation (KNIT) consisted of five institutions including Alverno College, Minnesota State Colleges and University System (MnSCU), Olivet College, Portland State University, and the University of Arizona.

b) The Learning Integration Group (LIG) consisted of participants from the University of California- Los Angeles (HERI), the University of Massachusetts – Boston (NERCHE), the University of Michigan (CSHPE), and the American Council on Education (ACE).

The KNIT and LIG distinctions were later dropped as KFHET began to operate as a collaboration that also included professional staff from WKKF's Higher Education and Leadership Programs.

Selected KFHET leaders were interviewed between January and June 2000. Also, at least one person from each CEC institution was interviewed at the first CEC meeting held in Snowbird, Utah in July 2000. A total of 30 interviews were conducted. For purposes of triangulation and thick description (Creswell, 1998), over 200 relevant documents ranging from original requests for proposals (RFPs), responses, position descriptions drafts, project working papers, and email correspondence were collected and analyzed.

Project Origins

Two contextual elements must be described before we illustrate the CEC development process. A discussion of the nature of funding practice by the WKKF is important because WKKF's strategy changed during this period. Also, the flow of monies from the Foundation to institutions is oft cited as problematic for respondents. A general overview of the KFHET initiative is necessary because creation of the CEC is embedded within the context of the larger initiative.

Funding Practice at the Foundation

Prior to KFHET, WKKF allocations were mainly transactional in nature. As one Kellogg officer put it, "it was over the transom funding." In most cases, Kellogg reviews unsolicited proposals. At times the Foundation's program officers uncover worthy funding ideas through discourse with grantees and encourage proposal submission. On rare occasions, WKKF issues national or international requests for proposals (RFPs). Regardless of how a proposal reaches the Foundation, if it is sound and in harmony with the WKKF values, the Foundation traditionally issues a check to the grantee. The grantee then administers the funds, conducts the project and reports progress. The proposal and subsequent grant guidelines serve as a contract between the two agencies. In some cases actual contracts are drawn. Beyond initial contact, ongoing progress reports and budget reviews, collaboration between the Foundation and the grantee was minimal. This type of transactional funding left considerable latitude to the grantee while operating the grant.

The KFHET institutions were to be the last funded in this manner. A shift in thinking and funding philosophy evolved from a series of ongoing internal conversations at the Kellogg Foundation. Although there was no corresponding shift in internal policy and accounting procedures at that time, the Foundation began linking similar projects believing that doing so would increase the power of their impact. Foundation program officers felt that they could add value beyond the granting of monies. They believed they could offer invaluable experience and perspective garnered from other projects, reviewing numerous proposals, and reviewing a variety grants. During the KFHET launch, the program officers tested these notions and began acting, not in the customary, transactional role of grantor, but as a participant and full member of the project group.

Within WKKF, this shift was complex and involved elements that amounted to an internal as well as external transformation in funding practice. In essence, the Foundation was shifting to what they consider a collaborative funding paradigm. Correspondingly, during Phase One (1998 –1999) and the design of Phase Two (1999-2001) of the KFHET initiative, WKKF staff became active members of the collaboration. Funding patterns changed from delivery of monies at the outset of phase one to delivery upon receipt of project deliverables in phase two. Despite the intent, some grantees felt this shift was less than overt and more like a move toward funding which was contingent on delivery of products rather than a truly collaborative system.

KNIT History

In July 1995, the Foundation's Board of Trustees approved a "Higher Education Strategic Plan" [1] centering on assisting institutions with change and transformation efforts (see Appendix A for detailed timeline). The following month, the Board approved a proposal support the legislated merger of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system (MnSCU) by funding a "leadership exchange program."[2] Extending the new Strategic Plan, the Board approved a five-year plan to identify and support five liberal arts colleges and regional universities to serve as "21st century institutional change prototypes." These institutions were to be: 1) undergoing significant and fundamental change, 2) improving service to students and community in the transformation effort, 3) utilizing their own resources to support the effort, 4) committed to assessable, holistic institutional change, 5) able to maintain a feasible and broadly supported implementation plan, 6) willing to connect with and share their work with other peer institutions, and 7) either past or current recipients of Kellogg funds. This funding mission further stipulated that a second phase effort would anticipate "identifying and funding an additional 5-6

[1] Source: "An Appropriation Recommendation" presented to and approved by the WKKF Board of Trustees at the 18 July 1995 meeting.

institutions…providing a cohort of 10-12 schools which can serve as national models for a variety of change processes."[3] Four institutions (Alverno College, Olivet College, Portland State, and the University of Arizona) were linked with MnSCU into an expanded WKKF initiative called the Kellogg Network for Institutional Transformation (KNIT) (see Appendix B for individual project descriptions). Interestingly, no grantee was directly aware of the other submissions nor that they would be brought together in some sort of collaborative effort during the submission process. The perception was that the Foundation had independently funded each institution under the traditional, transactional funding paradigm.

From KNIT to KFHET

Originally, WKKF staff were to administer both evaluative functions and a learning transfer process for the KNIT initiative. The objective was to use an "intentional strategy that would translate the experiences of the individual campuses into learning that could be adapted and replicated."[4] After two KNIT team meetings, it was clear the Foundation needed outside assistance to accomplish this. Consequently, an RFP process was initiated to identify specific higher education research centers and professional associations that could help.

Out of 18 responses, 12 were judged complete, addressing all capacity issues. Most responses suggested that the evaluative and learning transfer functions might be better consolidated into one, not two roles as originally intended. Several of the respondents' proposals were tenable, but four appeared to be complementary. The Foundation program officers decided that tying them together might produce more powerful results. The Foundation invited representatives from UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute (HERI), the University of

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[2] Source: "Leadership Exchange Program: A proposal to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation – Executive summary" dated 27 Feb 1995.

[3] Source: "A Appropriation Recommendation" presented to and approved by the WKKF Board of Trustees at the 18 July 1996 meeting– Page 7.

Massachusetts – Boston's New England Resource Center for Higher Education (NERCHE), the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Higher and Postsecondary Education (CSHPE), and the American Council on Education (ACE) to Battle Creek for an initial discussion.

One participant described the Battle Creek meeting's amorphous process as akin to "a first date - tentative and exploratory." Much of the usual posturing that accompanies a competitive grant making process was demonstrated. Still, representatives listened to each other's proposals, offered insight and ideas for improvement and brainstormed ways to maintain the individual components while composing collective initiatives. All walked away with a charge to further discuss ways to weave the best parts of each response into one collaborative effort. Over the course of a few months, each agency independently designed proposals for individual and collective initiatives. ACE agreed to integrate them. The joint proposal was approved in the Spring of 1998, officially sanctioning the Learning Integration Group (LIG).

Using a quasi-action-research approach, the LIG was to "provide the means by which the experiences of the institutions (KNIT) are accumulated, synthesized, assigned meaning, articulated and applied."[5] Even though roles were delineated in the joint proposal, the document did not address the critical question of how to collaborate either among the LIG participants or between LIG and KNIT. ACE assumed the role of convener, but each institutional member maintained an individual grant relationship with the Foundation. In practice, "it was like parallel play" according to one interviewee. In other words, the teams worked independently to achieve grant goals, and came together occasionally to share with the others. Even though there was an initial meeting (in Washington, DC, June 1998), it was at the December 1998 meeting hosted by UCLA where participants first articulated collective goals.

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[4] Source: WKKF KNIT and KFHET Phase II Request for Proposals, p. 5.
[5] Source: NERCHE preliminary proposal dated 1 March 1997.

KFHET Phase One Initiatives: Introducing the Network Idea [6]

The primary responsibility of the KNIT institutions during Phase One was to carry out their individual campus proposals (see Appendix B). ACE acted as KFHET coordinator and secretariat, serving as a clearinghouse of all project-related materials. UCLA's HERI team offered a graduate level course on change concentrating on generating a "grand theory" for higher education transformation. In addition to conduction one or two KNIT institution case studies, the UCLA group was to develop a research based explanation of significant shifts in student population trends and institutional undergraduate practice using the CIRP data set. The Michigan team also offered a graduate course focusing on linking organizational theory to change and transformation, wrote a number of case studies for pedagogical purposes, and developed as forum of faculty teaching transformation courses. The Michigan group became involved in the development of the Cluster upon consultation with the NERCHE project leads. NERCHE's Phase One proposal was the first to begin building a foundation for a national collaborative cluster. To capitalize on past successes in generating collaborative learning clusters among Boston area colleges and universities, NERCHE's major responsibility was to build some kind of "transformation network."

Moving Toward KFHET Phase Two: The Concept of a Cluster Emerges [7]

After a number of joint and separate KNIT/LIG meetings between June 1998 and January 2000 and the completion of several activities by each member of the group, the distinction between KNIT and LIG was subordinated as the KFHET meetings shifted toward a more collaborative focus. The relationships between KFHET members began to reflect more trust as connections were strengthened over time. Numerous conversations both in and outside of the

[6] All details in this section are from combined proposal submitted to WKKF by ACE on 24 Nov 1997.
[7] Source: WKKF KNIT and KFHET Phase II Request for Proposals.

formal meetings revolved around designing clusters to extend KFHET's work. However, NERCHE's interest in and experience with the concept remained central. NERCHE sponsored a review of the literature; which lead to a report (see Thomas, 1999) that was later shared with KFHET. This effort, as well as their deep enthusiasm for the idea, placed the NERCHE team in the lead toward developing the Cluster.

Late in 1998, WKKF asked each KFHET team to justify continued funding by responding to a Phase Two RFP. The aim was to "encourage ongoing participation and engagement around the principles and values" articulated throughout the duration of Phase One. While formal relationships and contracts were to be established "between the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and each of the grantees and contractors," the Foundation hoped to foster "mutually supportive and transforming relationships between and among all participants."

Aside from continuation of some specific Phase One efforts, Phase Two funding redirected support toward networking meetings and collaborative efforts only. The Foundation had "chosen to use multiple, interrelated networks as the vehicle for bringing about the desired changes in institutions and society." This reinforced the cluster idea championed by NERCHE, worked to sustain the KFHET collaboration, and left some latitude for potential future development of other clusters. All participants responded to the Phase Two RFP and continued to be involved. However, only NERCHE's response would specifically propose a cluster formation.

Civic Engagement Cluster Development

At the outset, most KFHET participants only had a vague notion about the focus and the operation of such collaborative arrangements. Three KFHET dynamics exacerbated their confusion. First, local leadership attrition and personnel changes caused fluctuations in KFHET

membership. Second, individual KFHET initiatives were at best loosely coupled. Both KNIT and LIG teams were implementing different and largely separate projects. It was difficult to see connections across institutional boundaries. Third, the introduction of and weaving of KNIT and LIG into KFHET was a turbulent endeavor. Ambiguous communication channels, leadership confusion, and a lack of immediate connectivity to the CEC initiative made real collaboration difficult. Some of the lessons garnered from the KFHET experience reflecting the difficult work of establishing productive multi-institutional learning networks are conveyed in the "Learnings from the Field" section.

Beginnings

From the beginning, the cluster effort was largely perceived as the NERCHE bailiwick. The original idea reflected the interest of one NERCHE faculty member upon receiving the LIG RFP solicitation. In concert with two colleagues (one from Michigan), this individual developed a preliminary proposal identifying five concentric "circles" or steps for realizing the RFP goals. One "circle" included the development of one or more multi-institutional learning clusters. As a fundamental piece of the NERCHE proposal, they characterized KNIT institutions as a core set of institutions that could serve as leaders for fostering change within the higher education industry.[8] Even though the ensuing joint proposal stipulated "one or more LIG principals would be associated with each cluster," it was a lengthy period before other KFHET members could envision how they fit with this particular portion of the project.

Generating Support

It took much behind the scenes work and a fair amount of persuasion to gain widespread support for the cluster concept. The first hurdle was to convince the Foundation that a cluster focus was appropriate and applicable to the KFHET initiative. The cluster idea represented a complete shift in how grants were funded by WKKF. Despite the stated collaborative goals of

KFHET, the Foundation still maintained very separate contracts with each grantee. The NERCHE team was asking for monies to support approximately 10 institutions in a highly interactive and collaborative effort. By the close of a Spring 1997 meeting with the Foundation, the NERCHE team received permission to move forward.

Convincing the KNIT institutions and the remaining LIG members became the next challenge. Realizing the need for sound theoretical rationale, NERCHE contracted with a consultant to produce a report examining the effectiveness of multi-institutional efforts. The white paper proved a useful tool for supporting the development of a cluster structure. Although no clear focus for the cluster emerged from early KFHET meetings, most institutions supported the cluster concept given NERCHE's willingness to spearhead the effort.

The Los Angeles KFHET Meeting - December 1998 [9]

By numerous accounts, the UCLA meeting was difficult in terms of fostering collaboration within KFHET. Participants were experiencing terminology and semantic problems. They were hampered by ambiguous leadership structures, differentiated goals, and funding uncertainty. The difficulties in overcoming natural boundaries and differences in initiatives prompted more than one person to insist that any move toward a cluster strategy must be held together by a linking theme. The NERCHE representatives suggested that a cluster should focus on themes such as civic learning, diversity or technology.[10] Other thematic networks were suggested, but it was argued that those ideas required further discussion and development. The most persuasive argument was made for selecting civic learning as a primary theme. The close of the meeting witnessed agreement on civic learning as the focus, and that it would serve as a pilot approach to transforming the higher education industry. The CEC

[8] Source: NERCHE preliminary proposal dated 1 March 1997, p. 5-6.
[9] Source: meeting minutes and an array of interview data.

received the working moniker "Civic Learning Cluster" later changed to the "Civic Engagement Cluster" reflecting the WKKF priority placed on "engaged" institutions and the emerging civic responsibility movement.[11]

Cluster Organizational Structure (see Appendix C)

NERCHE strengthened the development team by adding four people to an Advisory Board (including the colleague from Michigan). Together, the NERCHE leadership and the Advisory Board spent over a year shaping a detailed framework for the CEC. After numerous edits and revisions, the finer grain details (e.g. defining terminology, vision and mission creation, and determining an acceptable organizational structure) were put into writing and motion.

Toward the close of 1999, the group was ready to hire a Director and administrative support. A national search was conducted. The Advisory Board participated by critiquing position descriptions, nominating various candidates, and screening applications. Six finalists were invited to interview, often with one or more Board members participating via conference call. First, second and third choices were identified and an offer was made. Under the direction of the Board and NERCHE leadership, the new Director was placed in charge of managing the Cluster.

Meanwhile, the Board helped shape institutional selection criteria, and with guidance from Kellogg staff, Cluster leadership identified a list of about 100 potential college and university invitees. With a new Director in place, the next steps were generating interest within these institutions, issuing invitations for proposals, and selecting participants. Participation was targeted at 10-12 institutions.

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[10] Source: "A Cluster Approach to Transformation" by NERCHE.
[11] See book edited by Thomas Ehrlich.

Selecting CEC Participants

The pool of candidate institutions was limited to colleges and universities with some prior WKKF connection. By design, priority was given to the KNIT institutions. The expectation was that KNIT participants would bring in a level of sophistication about the Cluster and about collaborative experiences that would be invaluable to other CEC participants. Only two KNIT institutions had written participation in the CEC into their KFHET phase two proposals: Alverno and Olivet. Later, leaders at Portland State indicated an interest in participation directly to NERCHE.

Regardless of prior grant status, all institutions were required to follow the same application procedure. Introductory letters were forwarded to presidents of 100 Kellogg recommended institutions. Complete CEC RFP packets were distributed to institutions that formally demonstrated interest. The college or university, in turn, submitted responses to the RFP. Finalist institutions were identified based on quality of paper applications. Interviews and/or site visits were used to reveal institutional commitment to civic engagement and to assess willingness to collaborate. Offers were made to institutions that: [12] 1) demonstrated commitment to civic engagement; 2) had clearly identified outcomes for cognitive and affective learning; 3) included a broad set of faculty members, practitioners, institutional research staff, in leadership roles and the project; 4) articulated an approach to change appropriate for the institutional type and mission; 5) demonstrated a capacity to help create and provide leadership for an additional Civic Engagement Clusters; 6) provided a budget consistent with project expectations; 7) described an evaluative process that could demonstrate improvements in civic learning, personal development, and systematically study the change process; 8) agreed to participate in the

[12] Source: Final Draft of the CEC RFP.

UCLA Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP); and 9) had presidential authorized institutional commitment.

Cluster designers had also established criteria by which they would screen out institutional applicants. "Being a member of this transformation cluster cannot simply be a project conceptualized by the president, a small group of administrators, or a faculty or student affairs leader. To establish the base for transformation the application process must include key stakeholders for the diverse policies and practices involved in strengthening civic learning."[13]

Final decisions were made in conjunction with the WKKF representatives, the Advisory Board, and the new Director. Grant invitations were ready for distribution during the late Spring, 2000. However, because of funding confusion some recipients were not notified until early June. Participation was made contingent upon the ability to send one representative to the July 2000 meetings in Snowbird, Utah. These meetings were conducted in conjunction with the AAHE Summer Academy. With the selection process complete, ten colleges and universities sent representatives to the first Cluster meetings dovetailed onto the Academy agenda. A summary of participating institutions' RFP responses is provided in Appendix D.

Snowbird and Beyond [14]

Institutional representatives came to Snowbird with varied degrees of preparation and differing expectations. Some institutions brought teams of about 10 individuals, while two institutions only sent one representative. Each team leader was required to communicate with NERCHE so that descriptions for each project could be drafted and distributed as a means to begin sharing institutional stories with the other collaborating institutions.

[13] Source: Final Draft of the CEC RFP.
[14] Source: individual interviews with the team leads at the Snowbird meeting.

All institutions were to participate in the AAHE Summer Academy, which focused on developing institutional change initiatives. The expectation was that participation in the Academy would be complementary. CEC campus teams would focus their Academy time directly on their individual Cluster initiatives. Dedicated Cluster meetings started a day and a half before and continued along side the Academy agenda. Cluster specific meetings revolved around building the Cluster and outlining a collaborative agenda. The primary purpose of these initial meetings was to empower members to begin contributing to the direction of the CEC collaboration. The first evening session served as the official welcome where formal introductions were made and the agenda was disseminated. Opportunity for augmenting the agenda was made and subsequent adjustments made. The following morning, smaller focus groups were led by selected members of the Advisory Board to establish coherence and direction. These focus groups allowed for continued sharing of institutional stories, began the development of common culture and language, and started discourse toward building a viable set of Cluster objectives.

No Cluster team had done much thinking about how to best interact with others or what might be a deployable strategy for learning. Relying on the extroverted nature of their team members, many hoped learning would take place via contact with other teams. One emergent strategy was the targeting of interaction among campuses perceived to have similar goals, mission or aspirations as peers. Similarly, strategies for transferring learnings to the home campus were not anticipated beyond the usual practice of relying on participants to connect with other campus team members, or conducting team meetings upon returning to campus. As the July 2000 meetings came to a close, the direction and action of the Civic Engagement Cluster rested with its institutional members.

Learnings from the Field [15]

The steps for building the Civic Engagement Cluster were not smooth or predictable. Some KFHET participants even labeled it a turbulent, evolutionary process. As the CEC story unfolded, a number of pitfalls and delays were experienced and adjustments were made throughout. This section exposes the more prominent obstacles and hurdles that were overcome in order to interpret the experience and gain insight for building other multi-institutional collaboratives.

Perceptions of the Cluster Idea

As the CEC developed, there were many different and conflicting ideas of the cluster concept. By one report, the Cluster idea was forced on the LIG as something more practical rather than research-related. Another respondent indicated that, contrary to the collaborative aims of KFHET, the idea was superimposed on the KFHET initiative with no avenue for input. For many KNIT participants, the Los Angeles meeting was where they first heard about the Cluster idea. The idea was not uniformly well received. Some practitioners failed to see how the CEC fit their campus-specific initiatives. Ostensibly, the phase one KNIT institutions were placed in the awkward position of needing to get on the "cluster train" somewhere, or be dropped when KNIT funding came to a close.

These perceptions were formed while the CEC was not as well developed as it is today. NERCHE and their advisors were still discussing broad operational issues involved in such collaboration at the Los Angeles meeting. As plans became concrete, other KFHET members became supportive. KNIT participants began to see how they might benefit by participating in such a cluster. Fueled by the optimism of having overcome some KFHET organizational

[15] Much of the detail for this segment was derived from interview data. The names and citations have been withheld in order to preserve anonymity.

hurdles, one participant summed up: "I think the Civic Learning Cluster is very important and we will learn if it is. Let's see how well it works. What are the strengths and limitations? And hopefully we will build from there."

The Funding Conundrum

Related to the perception issue, funding problems (real and assumed) were attributed to delays in moving the project forward. The decline of Kellogg Corporation's stock price (approximately 50% in early 1998) became a much-whispered issue. Because WKKF depends on its stock holdings to fund philanthropic activities, any time Kellogg Corporation's stock price falls allocations to new projects shrink. Although twelve million dollars was allocated by WKKF for the transformation change initiative, KFHET participants worried that funding would be cut even when plans to continue had been developed. This chilled some of the optimism and motivation to invest time planning. Moreover, WKKF leadership became less encouraging that any monies beyond the original allocations would be forthcoming.

Once Phase II commitments were made, there were delays in agreement on CEC project objectives, securing NERCHE contracts, and a delay in receipt of funds by CEC participant institutions. Earlier postponements in fund distribution also caused concern for some participants. Not knowing the extent to which WKKF had an agenda in these delays, people speculated. Was it skepticism about the CEC, related to the dip in stock, or other changing procedures or priorities within the Foundation? Regardless, skepticism was reinforced by delay throughout the project. NERCHE leadership was not in a position to move forward with the CEC until October 1999. Final decisions on CEC membership were not finalized until June 2000 (one short month before the first meeting). Some cluster institutions did not receive distributions until October 2000.

Whether the original allocation is enough to sustain the Cluster lingers in most participant minds. CEC institutions were originally led to believe that funding would be $70,000 per institution per year for a total of five years.[16] At the start of the Snowbird meeting, this perception was corrected to only one year of funding and a total of $70,000 per institution. Given the broad scope of individual campus efforts, this investment will be spread quite thin mainly covering travel to Cluster meetings. Individual campus success rests heavily on a significantly greater investment on the part of the home institutions.

On Building Quality Multi-institutional Clusters

A number of lessons can be derived from the KFHET experience, the process of CEC development, and the challenges and experiences articulated by project participants. Although actual applied solutions will vary greatly and are highly dependent on unpredictable circumstances, such challenges might be mitigated by advance planning for any multi-institutional collaborative cluster. Below are the more salient lessons distilled from the case analysis. The tenets can be viewed from a practitioner's stance as collected wisdom. From an academic perspective, they may serve as hypotheses to test during future research.

Lessons for Establishing the Cluster Organization

- Identify and appoint a cluster champion. Cluster establishment begins with the identification of a project leader who has the drive and initiative to persevere over the long arduous road toward cluster formation. Any cluster development project may wither away without the dedicated efforts of one person or a small team of individuals spearheading the effort.

[16] The cause for the confusion is amorphous. Verbiage in the CEC RFP does specifically indicate that funding was to be allocated for five years. However, it is not clear in the sentences whether the clock started at the outset of KNIT, KFHET or the CEC. The RFP clearly commits to $70,000 for each institution, but it does not specify the length of the grant. Still, the institutional requirements segment of the RFP indicates that the institutions must commit to at least "two meetings per year." The implication being that there was to be more than one year of support. The most telltale sign that there was confusion is that almost all institutions had submitted budgets for multiple years of funding embedding the WKKF contribution into the proposal.

- Generate political as well as fiscal support. Given the fiscal realities and nature of how projects are funded in higher education today, it is necessary to develop support from varied participants. Which comes first will vary in each situation. Ideally, they will come simultaneously. Above all, everyone involved must clearly understand the funding arrangement, communicate the realities to potential participants, and be sure to follow up along the way to check the veracity of their understanding.

- Generate and clearly espouse the vision, mission, and objectives for the cluster. Lack of understanding about the structure of a cluster in KFHET was ameliorated only as the CEC vision, mission and objectives were clarified and spelled out.

Lessons for Organizing a Cluster

- Select members to participate in an advisory board who have the ability to add value to the development process as well as have a reputation that will legitimize the project. The CEC Advisory Board played a very active and useful role.

- Decide on how the coordination and ongoing management of the cluster are to be handled.

- Hire a coordinator/director who is conversant with the cluster's substantive thrust and knows how to facilitate institutional participation and learning.

- Set sufficient guidelines for publicizing the cluster, recruiting and selecting institutions, finalizing budgets for the cluster as a whole and for each institution, developing logistics for cluster operation, and so on.

Lessons for Identifying Cluster Participating Institutions

- Seek institutional participants with diverse backgrounds. Because of the hierarchical nature of the higher education industry in the United States, participants feel a pull to work mainly with institutions similar to their own. Efforts must be made to get past institutional complexes in order to have a valuable exchange of ideas. However, it is beneficial to ensure that there are commonalities across institutions as well. It is difficult for institutional participants to see the value of participation if they have no connection with at least one other college or university.

- Keep the number of institutions and participants down to a reasonable number. Beyond 10 to 15 institutions the cluster becomes more like a conference or a federation, which can be unwieldy or unworkable. CEC participants were a bit overwhelmed with the daunting task of getting to know numerous other participants upon arrival to the first meeting. The length of time needed to connect with each participant naturally increases along with the number of institutions.

- Encourage broad participation on each campus. This will ensure that as personnel changes, lapses in institutional memory about the project and lack of campus leadership are mitigated. As was discovered in the early days of the KFHET initiative, the propensity for attrition in campus leadership affects the direction of each institution's initiative. By encouraging a wide scope of project membership at each campus, attrition will not hurt the project in general as leadership roles could be subsumed by others already engaged in the project.

Lessons about Cluster Initiation and Initial Meetings

- Because the types of institutions and initiatives involved in the Cluster are greatly varied, fostering a free exchange of ideas and keeping the doors of communication open is a real challenge. Initially, time must be spent developing a cluster culture including a common language and purpose among cluster members.

- Time must be allocated to satisfying the need and desire for each institution to report and get familiar with each other while encouraging forward motion on collaborative endeavors.

- Measuring cluster success is challenging because individual institutional change or transformation is difficult to attribute to participation in the Cluster. Outcomes and evaluative measures must be constructed such that they are attributable to participation in the cluster and the resulting synergy. In other words, success must be directly resultant from and a byproduct of the collaboration. Some outcomes and evidences of learning in this case included: a new appreciation for and facility with working through the change processes and chaos; connectivity with others at various organizations; external validation and legitimization of individual projects; and, transference of project elements to other campus initiatives.

- Develop strategies for aiding participant institutions to benefit from the cluster. Almost all organizations entered the Cluster with no overt formula or strategy for extracting beneficial learning from other institutions. One solution is to develop an active interorganizational learning strategy that leverages the experience to maximize the learning and teaching experiences that happen through participation. From the data, several active strategies for learning are inductively evidenced by actions taken, but not espoused by the participants. These included benchmarking, exploration, finding linking threads and networking, extracting meaning from prior experiences, and utilizing outside consultants.

Conclusion

This case study has been an important element in the KFHET experience for at least two reasons. First, through examination of the CEC development we learn about how to design a collaborative interorganizational cluster. Second, the case serves as a focus for understanding how the KFHET partners struggled to learn from each other about change and

collaboration. While it is beyond the scope of this case to define broader learnings about KFHET collaboration and transformation, as a form of conclusion some insights or hypotheses for consideration are presented below.

- The nature of academic work can keep institutions isolated and competing with each other rather than collaborating.
- A common roadblock is often semantic vagaries, terminology or newly introduced jargon. Definitions and common ground must be forged.
- Ambiguous collaborative and project goals lead to confusion at meetings that involve multiple organizations. Frontloading a collaborative effort with a clear vision, mission, and set of objects, even if flexed to accommodate input later, probably fosters more efficient and productive meetings.
- Organizational structure (or lack of it) can have a direct affect on the collaborative. Being clear about whom or which agency is leading and what are the responsibilities of each participating organization work to keep the lines of communication open.
- Time demands outside of Cluster responsibilities distract participants and can prevent them from investing the proper amount of energy into achieving project goals.
- Definitions of "collaboration" varied greatly, but it should be understood that a certain amount of "messiness" might be necessary. One participant offered the an encompassing definition: "…collaboration involves a team of people who develop and share a common vision and then by extension, common goals; who then work together to actualize those goals and by extension see their vision through to fruition." In this case, collaborative efforts: offer broader perspectives when comprised of diverse and divergent individuals; must be perceived to be mutually beneficial operations; and involve considerably longer periods of time to accomplish goals as compared with individual projects.
- In general, any attempt at changing or transforming institutions can be considered "a difficult and hard slogging" process that generates resistance as one outcome of that process. From this case it is clear that higher education transformation is:
    - difficult because of deeply rooted culture of academe;
    - fueled by a misalignment of real actions and espoused missions or visions;
    - usually an evolutionary process and seldom revolutionary;
    - depends on the level of institutional readiness for change;
    - and involves a reconceptualization of current practice on the part of key institutional actors.

Appendix A: **Time Line**

Jan 1995	Higher Education Strategic Plan approved by the WKKF Board of Trustees
18 July 1995	WKKF Board of Trustees approves funding for what would later become known as KNIT
Winter 1995	MnSCU Presents their Leadership Exchange Program Proposal to WKKF and it is approved
Winter 1995/ Spring 1996	Proposals from Alverno, Portland State, Olivet and Arizona are submitted and approved
Fall 1996	KNIT meets with ACE and WKKF on two occasions WKKF invites several organizations to submit proposals to develop and implement a learning integration strategy for the KNIT project
Fall 1996	NERCHE develops a response to the Kellogg request including a cluster focus
Dec 1996	Four organizations are invited to an initial meeting of potential Learning Integration Group members (HERI, NERCHE, CSHPE, & ACE)
Spring 1997	Meeting with WKKF, NERCHE and CSHPE team members at the Detroit Airport where support was garnered to move the Cluster idea forward.
24 Nov 97	Combined LIG proposal forwarded to WKKF via ACE
Spring 1998	Combined LIG proposal approved by WKKF
Mid 1998	Kellogg (K: NYSE) Stock Value drops from around 50 dollars to 28 dollars per share. This slide continues into 2000 for a 52-week low for the year of around 21 dollars per share.
June 1998	First KFHET Meeting
Summer 1998	The Civic Engagement Cluster Advisory Board is formed
Sep 1998	NERCHE uses a consultant to conduct "An Examination of Multi-Institutional Networks" which resulted in a white paper supporting the CEC.
8 - 10 Dec1998	KFHET Meeting – CEC idea first introduced to KFHET in Los Angeles.
Feb 1999	WKKF issues an RFP to all KFHET Participants to solicit specific project initiatives for Phase Two funding continuation.
10 March 1999	KNIT - only Conference Call - One representative from each of the institutions.
26 Feb 1999	KFHET Meeting - In Washington, DC - Both KNIT and LIG present.
9 April 1999	Olivet College submits response to Phase Two RFP outlining specific intentions to be a part of the CEC.
14 April 1999	Alverno College submits response to Phase Two RFP outlining specific intentions to be a part of the CEC.
7-8 May 1999	KNIT Only Meeting - Washington DC – meeting was set per the request of the KNIT participants.
8 – 10 Aug 1999	KFHET Meeting - Battle Creek Michigan - KNIT and LIG in separate meetings join at close of meeting.
Oct to Dec 1999	Numerous drafts of the CEC RFP, announcements and the like are composed.

Fall 1999	Search for CEC project Director and administrative assistant conducted
25 Oct 1999	Packet of materials for Director position finalists sent to Advisory Board.
6 Nov 1999	Six finalists for the Director position are selected.
12 Nov 1999	Portland State sends an Email indicating that his institution will be submitting an application to participate in the CEC.
5-6 Dec 1999	KFHET Meeting in Washington, DC - All members present, but KNIT and LIG held separate meetings prior to coming together.
8 Dec 1999	Final Draft of the CEC RFP is distributed to Advisory Board for final edits aiming for delivery to potential institutions on 20 Dec 1999
December 1999	Cluster Director and administrative assistant hired
27 – 29 Jan 2000	KFHET Meeting - Tucson, AZ – New Director and administrative assistant introduced
Winter 2000	CEC RFP Finalized and sent to approximately 100 institutions from the Kellogg Foundation list of potential participants
14 Feb 2000	Deadline for application submission to NERCHE
14 Feb 2000 – May 2000	Site visits and interviews of top candidates for participation
June 2000	Decisions finalized and invitations for participation distributed
18 – 23 July 2000	First meeting of the CEC participants in conjunction with the Summer Academy of the American Association of Higher Education

Appendix B - KNIT Participant Project Descriptions[17]

Portland State University - The University Studies program, aimed at reforming the undergraduate curriculum, is in its sixth year at Portland State; the 1999 graduating class will be the second class to have gone through the entire four-year curriculum. The freshman and sophomore components of the program are firmly established and have strong faculty and student support. The junior and senior components are still being modified. The curriculum has affected the campus community in many positive ways, including making teaching a more public activity at the institution and involving graduate and undergraduate students in the process of mentoring and teaching. The next phase of the change initiative at PSU will reform the graduate curriculum to reflect the new institutional values, and push the undergraduate curriculum out to the community colleges so that the large number of transfer students at PSU can more easily adapt to the University Studies curriculum. Resources continue to be an issue. Changes at the state system level in Oregon have the potential to positively affect the resource issue at Portland State - the state legislature is considering the possibility of letting institutions keep their tuition dollars, and also allowing them to count extended study and summer school students in their enrollment numbers. This would be good for Portland State because they bring in the most tuition dollars in the state and they serve a large number of students through their extended study and summer programs. They were previously unable to count these students in the number that determined state funding.

University of Arizona - The University of Arizona change initiative aims to add a fourth dimension - people - to the three dimensions - research, teaching and service - traditionally recognized as important at colleges and universities. To develop the people dimension at the University of Arizona, there is an increased focus on campus life and community. Four programs highlight the focus, the Ambassadors Program (improving the employment processes), the Connections Program (student involvement in the community), the Preceptor Program (student involvement in classroom), and the Program for Academic Leadership (department head development). These four programs have been successful in improving relations with the minority communities of Tucson, providing greater attention to and investment in department head development, strengthening community partnerships through community grants, and expanding opportunities for student-faculty interaction and career-related experiences. Phase II of the Kellogg grant will devote money to sustaining the programs and making them permanent pieces of the University of Arizona structure.

Minnesota State Colleges and Universities - MNSCU is an enormous system in Minnesota which employs over 15,000 people and 7,500 faculty members, offers 3500+ programs, and serves 120,000 students each year. The goals of the system are to address the changing needs of its student body, reach more students, and contribute to the formation of a productive workforce. The system is trying to keep up with the demands of the workplace and the growing economy and maintain the academic quality of its programs. The Phase II Kellogg change initiative at MNSCU proposes a Leadership Institute to help administrators and faculty to be creative and transformative leaders. The Leadership Institute will build on the previous Kellogg initiative (Kellogg Leadership Exchange Program), which allowed promising institutional leaders to learn about different parts of the system. The new Institute will be a two-year program and serve

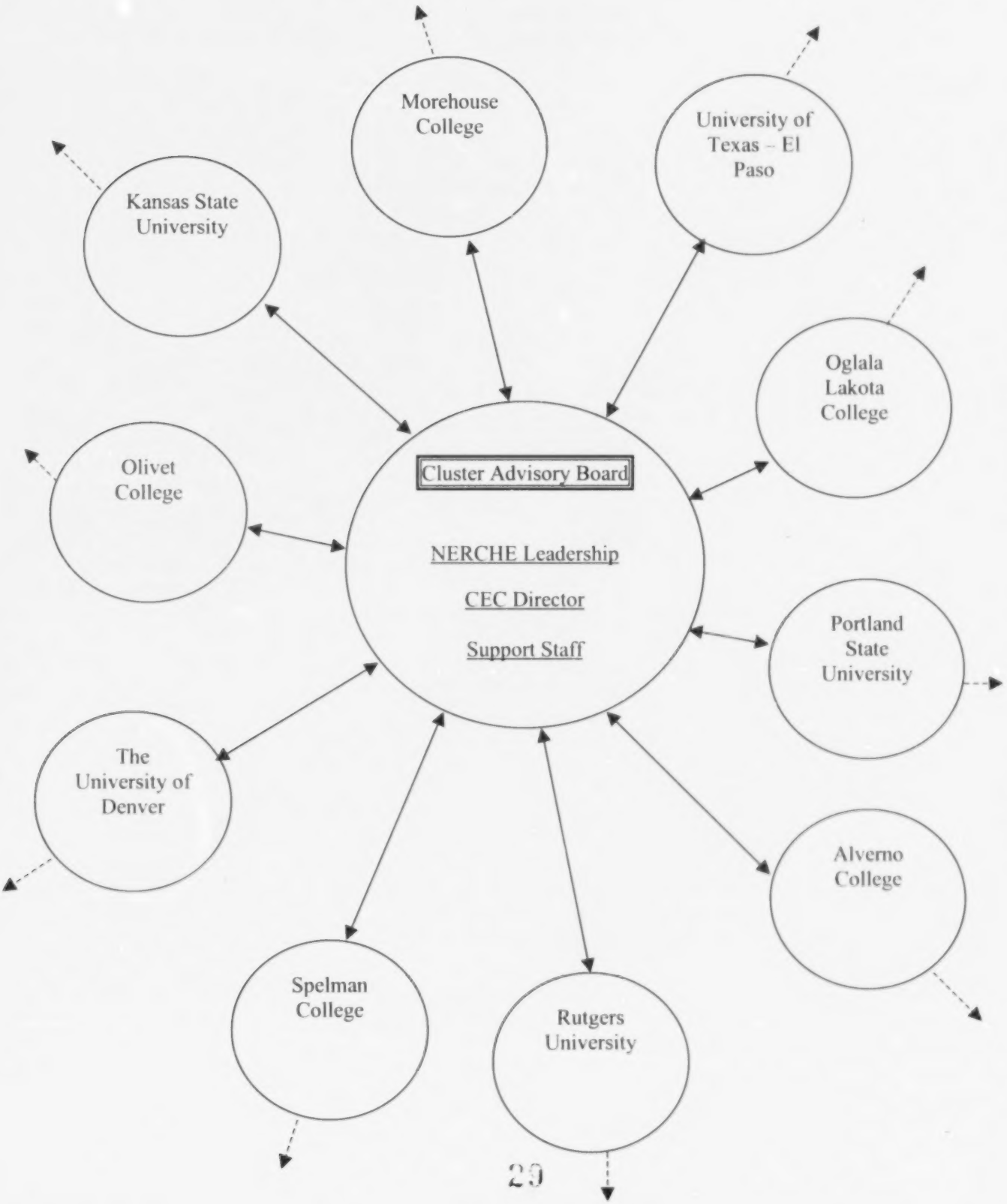
[17] Source: meeting minutes of 7-8 May 99 KNIT only meeting – Verbatim.

between 30 and 40 people. The low trust levels between the institutions and the system office pose a significant obstacle to the progress of the change initiative at MNSCU.

Olivet College - The Olivet change initiative centers on issues of diversity. The first phase included the identification of three critical challenges and development of the Olivet Plan and the Olivet College Compact. Key components of the second phase are community-based learning, student portfolios, and the new Character Education Resource Center. Evidence that the first phase of changes are having positive effects include the campus acceptance and use of the College Compact, the commitment of the first graduating class to self and community, and the increased representation of minority students on campus (from 6% in 1993 to 23% in 1999). Cultural transformation remains a significant issue for Olivet. The College Compact encouraged reevaluation of significant aspects of the student culture (such as Greek life), and also contributed to a greater willingness on the part of the faculty and staff to address problems openly. Additionally, non-academic staff are encouraged to take responsibility for their role in student learning and character education. However, changing campus norms and institutional roles is a slow process and one without a clear formula. Institutional representatives expect President F.J. Talley, who will start in the fall of 1999, to play a significant role in addressing the cultural and resource issues.

Alverno College - The Alverno student population (2000 students) is all women, mainly commuters, who take classes both on weekdays and weekends. Alverno has been working to make its campus a student-centered learning community since the early 1970s. The structure of the institution as well as institutional expectations of faculty, staff, and students, is organized to reflect the focus on student learning. To graduate, students must demonstrate key abilities as well as mastery of a discipline. Alverno adopted a matrix structure of ability and disciplinary departments, and faculty serve in both an ability department and a discipline department. Processes of evaluation (self and institutional) and change have been built into the institutional structure to the point that change is an expected part of everyday life at Alverno. Alverno's Kellogg proposal for Phase II focuses on learning to use technology to enhance learning. To fully integrate the use of technology in the curriculum, the departments at Alverno will evaluate the ways in which technology can most effectively be used as a delivery tool and as a vehicle for assessment.

Appendix C –Civic Engagement Cluster – Organizational Structure



Appendix D: **Cluster Institution Descriptions** [18]

- Morehouse College, a historically Black men's college founded in 1906, has proposed to design a Twenty-First Century Racial Justice program as the focus of its new initiatives for participation in the CEC. Trough the creation of intentional institutional spaces in America to identify, cultivate, sponsor, and place future generations of leaders who will carry the seeds of racial justice and inter-cultural tolerance with them as they move up the ladders of education, work, family, and civic life, Morehouse leadership hopes to transform its own and the greater community. This project is comprised of two components: faculty advisement and strategic campus leadership formation. The basic goals of these components are: a) to identify, cultivate and strategically place a select number of freshmen who will be involved in a four-year experience of intense reading, writing, discussion and interning in the are of twenty-first century racial justice, and b) to identify, organize, and support a system of influential faculty advisers, administrators, and professional staff who, over time, come to reach a consensus on the best ways to transform the campus culture to institutionalize the Program as a Morehouse brain trust on twenty-first century racial justice strategic planning.

- Kansas State University, a comprehensive research, land-grant institution, has recently engaged in a strategic planning process to identify innovative programs dedicated to cultivating civic learning…to position itself for the 21st century and set the stage for participation in the CEC. The University is already engaged in three related initiatives including a community service program, a Leadership Studies and Programs major, and the Tilford Group (a curriculum development group working to design a multicultural curriculum model). Working within standing university structures, campus leadership has proposed five different initiatives that will become a part of the Civic Engagement Cluster initiatives: 1) The leadership team will work to identify civic learning competencies for the University; 2) The Provost's office will sponsor a civic learning lecture series; 3) a workshop on civic learning and multi-cultural competencies for department heads will be sponsored by the Provost's office and the leadership team; 4) partnership between the Community Service Program and Leadership Studies and Programs will be expanded to create a secondary major in Leadership and Community Service; and 5) a comprehensive set of incentives for faculty participation in civic learning initiatives and the variety of programs via traditional and non-traditional development models will be established.

- Alverno College, established in 1887 as an independent undergraduate college for women (~2000) in Milwaukee, has been an active participant in the KNIT initiative. Stemming from four core institutional values (effective citizenship, valuing in decision-making, global perspective taking, and social interaction), the campus leadership proposes to involve women in civic life in new ways. This initiative has two main goals: 1) continue the curricular evolution in the area of educating women for civic life, and 2) placing an emphasis on better preparing for effective leadership in future additional Civic Engagement Clusters. Beneath these goals the College plans numerous objectives

[18] Source: each institutions respective response to the CEC RFP.

including reviewing the current internship seminar, working with teachers of new students to better integrate the teaching related to civic engagement, creation of a junior level course entitled "Global Effective Citizenship," and effectively coordinating community-based research projects.

- Rutgers University, encompasses the three different campuses of the State University of New Jersey (Camden, New Brunswick, and Newark), locates their "Learning Goals" as the basis for the University's commitment to making civic learning a core theme in the undergraduate curriculum. For over ten years, the University has sponsored the Citizenship and Service Education (CASE) program which aims to integrate service learning directly into the academic curriculum. By participating in the CEC, Rutgers hopes to expand CASE by an additional 45 courses through a Civic Learning Faculty Development Program and a Civic Learning Instructor's Certificate Program.

- Spelman College, a historically Black women's college, was founded on the basic principle of service, and this commitment to the core ideals and function of a civil society continues to permeate the living and learning campus environment. Within that spirit, the Spelman community already engages in a first-year orientation program, houses the Johnnetta B. Cole Institute for Community Service and Community Building, and sponsors the Bonner Scholars program. Spelman leadership proposes to bring a more integrated and systematic approach to the civic learning activities that exist on the campus as well as serve as a model for other minority-serving, liberal arts, and women's institutions. Spelman proposes to work with the CEC to advance in three key areas: 1) campus administrative infrastructure, 2) faculty and staff development, and 3) student leadership development.

- The University of Denver, a medium-sized, independent institution with approximately 3200 undergraduates, continues to fact the challenges and opportunities to clarify and expand the role of civic education for its students. Having been engaged in civic learning and engagement for over 10 years, the University has received significant notoriety. University leadership has proposed a civic learning transformation initiative that focuses on the development of a strategic alignment model. Through this model institutional commitment to civic learning is assessed in terms of strategy, structure, shared values, systems, and people. Moreover, campus leadership expects to provide leadership for additional Civic Engagement Clusters in the Rocky Mountain region through a number of current initiatives and affiliations.

- Oglala Lakota College, a baccalaureate and master's degree granting tribal college located in South Dakota, has been deeply enmeshed in the concept of character education called "Walakota." "Walakota" refers to the "whole person in balance and in harmony, spiritually, physically, mentally, and socially." The Lakota's leadership has proposed an institutional transformation effort to implement throughout the College the vision of "Walakota Across the Curriculum." Following a model in their own Department of Education, they hope to incorporate civic learning across the curriculum. Specifically, College leaders hope to implement increased opportunities for all students, focus on learning rather than transition models of education, offer training in consensus building and mediation for faculty and staff, and offer enhanced service learning training in all departments.

- Olivet College, a private, residential, liberal arts college with approximately 900 students, has been an active participant in the KNIT initiative. In response to a 1992 racial crisis, Olivet leadership began an all-out effort to embrace its multi-cultural roots via reshaping the entire curriculum in a new vision: "Education for Individual Responsibility." Continuing on this rebuilding effort, Olivet envisions using the CEC project as an opportunity to develop learning experience that enhance a student's understanding of world history, politics and economics, as well as the application of that knowledge to social problems. In particular, the College hopes to further transform its Civilization Studies program, develop programs that provide real opportunity for students to get off campus to learn first hand about local, state, and federal history related to social activism and justice, further clarify how the entire institution can better coordinate its on- and off-campus activities that connect to civic responsibility.

- The University of Texas at El Paso, a comprehensive institution serving approximately 15,000 students is unique in that it lies on the border with Mexico. Students crossing the border to attend receive in-state tuition. Currently, UTEP hosts a variety of programs that support strong connections with the surrounding community and local secondary and primary school systems. In addition to creating a model of "civic-centered learning" via offering a broad range of courses, the University hopes to pilot and support additional civic learning courses, conduct liaison work with area high school faculty, prepare reports on models and civic materials for courses, and establish a civic "shadowing" experience for students within community organization and with public officials.

- Portland State University, a comprehensive, urban institution serves approximately 15,200 students and has been an active member of KNIT. Over time, the University has been able to shift its University Studies Program (a required for all undergraduates) toward a civic mission. By participating in the Cluster, PSU targets the following goals: extend faculty engagement with civic learning in both research and teaching; enhance the institutions' intentional focus on civic learning in both the curriculum and co-curriculum; integrate the two; expand existing partnerships with K-12 schools and local community colleges; and clarify and assess expected student learning, community and institutional, outcomes related to civic learning.

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